

# What Do You Think About the Christ?



## PART I

**Dallas Burdette    December 6, 1997**

**Thrust statement:** **Jesus is God's Anointed One.**

**Scripture reading:** **Matthew 22:42**

What do you think about the Christ? There is no one here today who has not asked themselves that question. For almost two thousand years, men and women have searched for an answer to that dispute. In examining this controversy, one is confronted with various responses down through the centuries. Why is this question so important? One's eternal destiny depends upon a proper response to this discussion. Is he God or man? Did He preexist before becoming man? Is he eternal? These are questions that one must solve in seeking a solution to the question that Jesus asked the Pharisees: **"What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?"** (Matthew 22:42).

Do you believe the words of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." (John 1:1-2). Was He really the Son of God? Did He leave heaven and come down to this world for a purpose? Did He come to seek and save the lost? A proper answer to these questions should assist one in making the correct reply to the question: **"What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?"** (Matthew 22:42).

### **The Bethlehem Manger**

To begin this quest for answers to the question that Jesus asked the Pharisees, let us start with Luke's Gospel. Luke narrates some political history leading up to the birth of Jesus. He informs us that Caesar Augustus had issued a decree for a census of the Roman world and that Quirinius was governor of Syria (Luke 2:1-2). He also fills in additional information about the events leading up to God becoming flesh. He writes that

Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to

him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn ([Luke 2:4-7](#)).

Matthew writes about the miraculous conception of Mary through the Holy Spirit ([Matthew 1:18](#)). In order to verify the truthfulness of this assertion, he cites a prophecy of Isaiah ([7:14](#)) concerning the virgin birth of our Lord, a prediction made seven hundred years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, not in a palace, but in a manger. He left the grandeur of heaven for a crown of thorns; He left the glory of heaven for a shameful death on a tree. Paul, approximately twenty-five years after the crucifixion, captures in poetic language the sacrifice of the one who became flesh.

Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,  
but made himself nothing,  
taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.  
And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
and became obedient to death—  
even death on a cross! ([Philippians 2:5-8](#)).

### **Christ as Teacher**

Again, one is still confronted with Jesus' question: "**What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?**" ([Matthew 22:42](#)). What do you think about the Christ as a teacher? Listen to how the people reacted that heard His Sermon on the Mount: "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law" ([Matthew 7:28-29](#)). After the imprisonment of John the Baptist ([Matthew 4:12](#)), Jesus returned to Galilee and began to preach, "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near**" ([Matthew 4:17](#)). While in Galilee, following the selecting of His disciples, Matthew again informs his readers that "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people ([Matthew 4:23](#)).

Immediately upon calling attention to His teaching throughout Galilee, Matthew gives an example of His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount ([chapters 5-7](#)). You know the Sermon, do you not? One cannot read this Sermon without standing in awe, as did the people who heard Him. Are you now reflecting upon His many parables? One of His most memorable parables, the Prodigal Son, is still repeated to illustrate God's forgiveness.

### **Christ as Physician**

Immediately following His Sermon on the Mount, Matthew gives evidence to substantiate not only His authority to teach, but to heal as the Great Physician. Upon coming down from the mountain, following His Sermon, Jesus is met by a man plagued with leprosy. This man approached Jesus and knelt before him and requested healing. To this Jesus responded by reaching "out his hand and touched the man. '**I am willing,**' he said. '**Be clean!**' Immediately he was cured of his leprosy" ([Matthew 8:3](#)). Again, Matthew reports the faith of the centurion in his request to Jesus to heal his paralytic servant. Jesus said, "**I will go and heal him.**" ([8:7](#)), and the paralyzed servant was healed at that very hour ([8:13](#)).

One could multiply the miraculous healings of Jesus, but His answer to John the Baptist, who inquired of Him as to whether or not He is the One expected, or should they look for another, is quite revealing as to the nature of His mission.

Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me" (Matthew 11:5-6).

But these points are not the particular circumstances that I wish to stress in pursuing an answer to the question asked by Jesus: "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" (Matthew 22:42). In seeking to find out what we think about the Christ, first, let us go to His enemies to find their reactions, and, second to His friends to uncover their impressions.

### The Pharisees

First, among the witnesses, let us call upon the Pharisees. Just a perusal of the book of Matthew reveals how much they hated Him. What did they have against Him? Just what did the Pharisees "think about the Christ"? Matthew summarizes an event that took place while Jesus was having dinner with him in his home. He says,

Many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matthew 9:10-13).

Luke also reports the accusation of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law in their tongue-lashing of Him. What was their criticism? "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2).

For the Christian this information is gladly received news. This is what causes us to praise God, not something that brings about rejection of Jesus. Jesus came to extend mercy and compassion and kindness and forgiveness to the sinner. This mercy is at the very heart of the Gospel. This is the Good News to a lost and dying world. The Gospel is for the downtrodden, the downcast, the dejected, the discouraged, the shattered, the broken hearted, the sad, and the crushed. "It is not the healthy," said Jesus, "who need a doctor, but the sick" (Matthew 9:12). This is one of the greatest compliments that one could ascribe to Jesus.

Matthew gives us another insight about the resentful spirit of the religious leaders while Jesus was hanging upon a tree. But in this perception, he discloses a truth that the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders announce.

"He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him (Matthew 27:42-44).

"He saved others." And He did! He voluntarily laid down His life for us. In fact, John records this particular saying of Jesus in His discourse about the Shepherd and His Flock.

The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father" (John 10:17-18).

What the religious leaders were saying is quite true, "He saved others." Mark cites the forcefulness of this truth as he relates the events leading up to Jesus' startling statement as found in His response to the request of James and John for positions of honor in His kingdom. Mark writes,

When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:41-45).

Jesus was a ransom for many. He died for others. The Pharisees were quite correct in their assessment of what He accomplished – "He saved others." Every person must answer for themselves the question asked by Jesus: "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" (Matthew 22:42). Why not allow the Christ to save you from God's wrath, from the dominion of sin, from the curse of the law, and from condemnation? The writer of Hebrews encapsulates the very essence of redemption in his discussion of the efficacy of the blood of Christ, when he says,

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant (Hebrews 9:14-15).

Why delay your salvation? Why not come today? John, the apostle, exclaims, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (Revelation 22:17).

## PREACHED

*Grassy Church of Christ (Arab, Alabama), December 7, 1997, 11 a.m. Service*